



# Diocese of Shreveport

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Office of the Bishop

June 22, 1995

Dr. Maxine F. Singer  
President  
Carnegie Institution of Washington  
1530 P Street, Northwest  
Washington, D.C. 20005-1910

Dear Maxine:

I hope these Summer days treat you and your husband well.

Thank you for your letter of May 24, 1995, and the inquiry about the Joint Appeal Against Human and Animal Patenting. You are always fair in your assessments, a quality that is most admirable.

The paper which I developed pretty much serves to introduce my thinking about gene patenting. While I am not interested in fostering the agenda of Jeremy Rifkin, I do wish there were more open dialogue on such an important topic.

The two issues, the patenting of human genes versus those of animal genes, needed to be separated in the Joint Appeal statement. This was the first opportunity, however, to awaken discussion among the religious leaders of the various faiths. It had some merit, therefore.

If you recall, in our assembly last October, Pope John Paul II did briefly address the topic of gene patenting after having employed the Catholic teaching on human dignity, justice and the service of science. His quote is given in my reflection.

In the longer run of time, I believe that if some of the questions are addressed as I have outlined them, Catholic teaching will endorse much of what is involved with gene patenting—save germ-line products—as long as the human dignity and the justice issues can be assured.

I welcome your thoughts in this matter as I very much appreciate your experience and insights.

At the present time the Bishops' Conference is handling all of the public statements. The Committee for Science and Human Values and the "powers that are" in

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the Conference prefer it that way. Needless to say, I have enough to do in my own backyard. I have sent my reflections to the SHV Committee, but I doubt that much will happen.

Frankly, I felt let down by the fact that decisions on how to handle this issue were made without involving or supporting that which I said when the media found no answer at NCCB.

In any case, I am interested in supporting scientists and fostering new therapies. At the same time, however, there are questions to be asked in light of the larger vision. The dialogues are needed so that we can avoid a new form of Ludditism which could become prevalent among certain religious leaders.

Again, many thanks for your interest and for all that you do in these fields.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William B. Friend".

+William B. Friend  
Bishop of Shreveport

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Enclosures: "An Introduction to Genes and Patents"  
Copy of Jeremy Rifkin's Letter of May 22, 1995